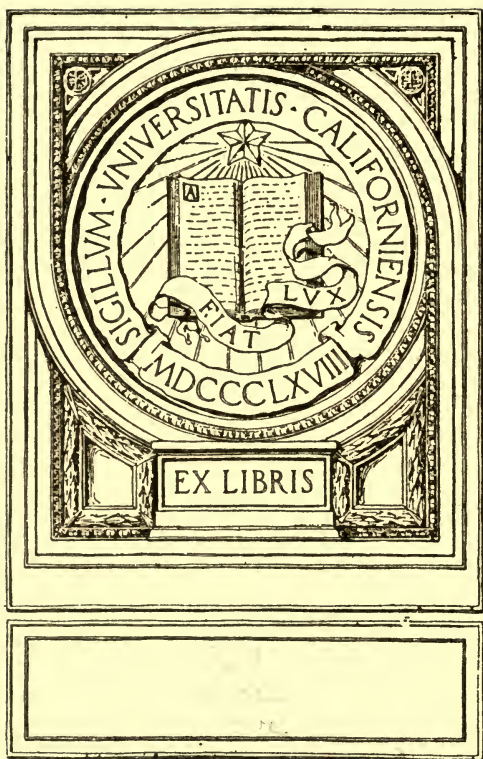


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THE CRY OF YOUTH

By Harry Kemp
JUDAS, A PLAY

THE CRY OF YOUTH

By
HARRY KEMP



NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
MCMXIV

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To
Gaylord Wilshire

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POEMS BY HARRY KEMP

JOSEPH'S LAMENT

MY boy, my boy, and art thou dead?
Would they had stretched these limbs
instead

Upon this bitter leafless tree!
But thou wouldst pay small heed to me!
Yet hadst thou given me heed, my boy,
Thou'dst known a workman's quiet joy:
To sit in the declining sun
At peace when the day's stint is done—
A wife had sat at thy right hand:
A cot, a little space of land
With one gray olive tree before,
And a seat by a vine-clad door
Had blessed thee, happy at thy trade,
And a small son had climbed and played
With broken prattle on thy knee—
But, son, thy soul was deaf to me . . .
And so thou hang'st where all may see . . .
O shameful death! O shameless tree!
My murdered boy! . . . Woe, woe is me!

CARRYING THE BANNER

[Which is tramp-argot for walking the street
all night]

I HAD no bed to go to and I had to walk the
street.

I passed a lone policeman going up and down
his beat.

A solitary cab whirled by and made a hollow
sound.

I stamped my feet to keep them warm and
tramped around and 'round.

A strangling icy fog dropped down and draped
the town in white

As one would shroud a maiden perished ere
her wedding night.

I moved as in a land of ghosts. The wind went
thro' my hair

Like the fingers of a demon searching for some
stigma there.

The moon hung watery and thin. The stars
had faded out.

Amid a labyrinth of night I groped and groped
about.

I moved along the water-front. I felt so small
and lone

As I heard the great ships at the docks strain
at their ropes and groan.

I footed it thro' Chatham Square and up along
Broadway.

I prayed the Lord to take the night and give
me back the day,

The warm kind day, the cheery day that kissed
one's eyes with light,

For it seemed to me the world at last had found
its endless night . . .

But suffice to say I saw the East stir and grow
pale apace

As a coward loses color when he looks in Mur-
der's face,

And then the City stirred and stretched and
drew a quickened breath

And struggled out of nightmare sleep like Laz-
arus from death. . . .

And then I walked alone no more . . . The
streets grew thronged with men—

And I said 'Thank God' with all my heart, for
it was day again!

NICODEMUS

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night.—John 3:1-2.

And there came also Nicodemus, which *at the first* came to Jesus by night.—John 19:39.

AND Nicodemus came by night
When none might hear or see—
He came by night to shun men's sight
And away by night slunk he.

He dared not come by light of day
To move where sinners trod:
He must hold apart from the common heart,
For he was a Man of God. . . .

But the honest Christ, he walked with men
Nor held his ways apart—
With publicans talked, with harlots walked,
And loved them all in his heart. . . .

Came Nicodemus to Christ by night;
And long they reasoned, alone,
Till the Old man saw the sham of the Law
That turned his being to stone:

He tore the formal husks from his life;
He was born again, though gray.
And, erect with the youth of a Living Truth,
He dared the world by day!

LYNCH-LAW

THE deed he had done was a terrible one,
And the wrath-roused countryside,
Pale silent groups of resolute men,
Scoured every wood and swamp and glen
Where a desperate man might hide.

And at last they struck his straggling trail
By the shores of a reedy lake.
They followed with bloodhounds all night long.
They ran him down like a snake
And dragged him forth, when the dawn was
red,
From the tangled canes of a brake.

They pinioned his hands behind his back,
With buffets his head was bowed,
And the mob rushed roaring at his side
Like a storm-blown thunder-cloud.

And the victim shook like grass in a brook—
His soul was shaken with dread . . .
For his was a deed for which men swing,
And swing by the neck till dead.

They hurried him on in a farmer's cart
Where the road wound rough and brown—
And silence fell, like a hush in hell,
Over the outraged town,

As the people thronged the paven streets
In dreadful holiday
To behold a mob of maddened men
Take another man's life away.

They dragged the victim across the park;
They threw him down in the square;
They noosed the halter about his neck
Muscular, swart, and bare—
And a hundred men rushed back with the rope,
And he shot straight up in the air.

All day IT swung from the telegraph pole
In the eyes of the sullen town—
As tho' the body still held the soul
All day it swayed from the telegraph pole—
But at even they cut it down . . .

Yes, they let it swing, the horrible thing,
In the eyes of the sullen town,
Till the sheriff came with tardy shame,
At eve, and cut it down.

THE RIDE

I STRUCK him down in sudden wrath
Over a trivial word . . .
I shook him twice. . . . I shook him thrice
. . .
He neither spake nor stirred . . .

Then forth into the night I fled
And spurred my flying steed;
In faith a lucky man was I,
For none had seen the deed.

All night I rode among the hills.
The sky arched deep and wide. . . .
Ah! like the presence of the wind
I felt him at my side.

At dawn I passed men on the road:
They spake with friendly tone;
One proffered me companionship—
He thought I rode alone.

"Right gladly will I ride with you,"
I answered; but, unseen,
The man that I had done to death
Slipped fearfully between.

"I swear you are a gloomy man,"
My fleshly fellow said—
He knew not my companionship
Was wholly with the dead. . . .

I stayed for neither food nor rest;
My horse with staggering pace
Strove time on time to pause our flight
At brook or grassy place,—

And still, when fell the second night,
That thing of shadowy fear
Kept riding near me like the wind
And whispered in my ear . . .

Aha! I saw him . . . now! . . . at last! . . .
With murder still engrossed
I struck . . . He parted like a mist. . . .
I could not slay his ghost.

I mantled up my face in dread
And let my horse run on;

HE too had seen, nor needed now
The whip to urge him on . . .

Ere day we fell, my horse and I,
Where cactus sprawled in sand—
“Let’s play at cards,” the shadow said;
I rose at his command;

I dealt the cards at his command,
(My steed lay dead thereby),
“And if YOU win, you live!” he said,
“And if I win you die!”

We played: “I win! I win!” he cried . . .
The dawn rose, vast and still . . .
Behold, the sheriff and his men
Come riding o’er the hill!

JOSES, BROTHER OF JESUS

JOSES, the brother of Jesus, plodded from
day to day,

With never a vision within him to glorify his
clay;

Joses, the brother of Jesus, was one with the
heavy clod,

But Christ was the soul of rapture, and soared,
like a lark, with God.

Joses, the brother of Jesus, was only a worker
in wood,

And he never could see the glory that Jesus,
his brother, could.

"Why stays he not in the workshop?" he often
used to complain,

"Sawing the Lebanon cedar, imparting to woods
their stain?

Why must he go thus roaming, forsaking my
father's trade,

While hammers are busily sounding, and there
is gain to be made?"

Thus ran the mind of Joses, apt with plummet
and rule,
And deeming whoever surpassed him either a
knave or a fool,—
For he never walked with the prophets in God's
great garden of bliss—
And of all the mistakes of the ages, the saddest,
methinks, was this:
To have such a brother as Jesus, to speak with
him day by day,
But never to catch the vision which glorified
his clay.

BATHSHEBA

KING DAVID, from his house-top
Saw One whose only dress
Was the exceeding glory
Of her own loveliness,

While down the water sparkled
Like star-dust powdered fine,
And lightly, brightly followed
Her body's shapely line;

Then, thrall unto the splendor
Of marble-contoured limb,
The great King's trumpet languished,
His voice forsook the hymn . . .

Now Uriah's sworded hand
Was swift with the naked knife,
And David feared his wrath—
But he lusted after his wife. . . .

But, though he felt as a thief,
In his secret soul he laughed,
"Ha! Ha! the strongest men
Are flies, in the web of craft!"

And over the vineyards green,
And beyond the mountains gray,
Before the Ammonite town
The Hebrew army lay:

So he sent Uriah forth
With his own death writ, in his hand:
"See that the Bearer die—
'Tis David thy King's command!"

And they gave him an hundred men
And stationed him nighest the wall—
And many and brave were slain,
But Uriah the first of all. . . .

When a messenger running came
In his heart King David laughed:
"Ha! Ha! The wisest men
Are flies, in the web of craft!"

THE SCAPEGOAT

THEY bore me away from the happy flock
And away from the hill slopes green,
Away from the midday shade of trees
And waters cool and clean.

And here, where the Mounts of Moab close
The East with a purple rim
And the sky is a bowl of spilling fire,
Mine eyes in death wax dim.

They led me forth with austere joy
And the psalter's solemn sound,
And about my newly-budded horns
A scarlet fillet wound;

And they say that I pay for a People's sins,
Who burn with thirst and die—
But whether the tale be true or no,
God only knows, not I.

But, however it be, I wonder why
They led me forth, accurst,
Who, of all the hillside-clamb'ring flock,
Was neither best nor worst;

And was it really the Will of God
That brought me here to die
Where the Salt Sea stinks, and the salt marsh
reeks,
And the dead reeds rustle dry?

Yes, why should they lead me, me, of all,
To the desert sick with drought? . . .
I have dreamed, three nights, 'neath fiery stars,
That green grass filled my mouth,—

Where the Salt Sea stinks, and the salt marsh
reeks,
And the dead reeds rustle dry,
I have dreamed, three nights, of a stream that
sweeps
In a sheet of silver by. . . .

O, I wonder if it be true or no
That the good Lord *did* decree
That the sins of a People could be cleansed
By the death of one like me! . . .

For why should I, who have done no wrong,
For the sins of others die
With a scarlet fillet about my horns?—
God only knows, not I!

THE CONFLICT

LISTEN, listen to the blowing bugles!
I am young . . . The voice of them is
sweet.

Arm you well, O Youth, 'tis you they're calling.

That's the cry that never sounds retreat.

Once entangled in those plunging squadrons,
Carried as the foam is on the wave—
You can never cease the breaking battle
Till you fall into an open grave.

WHY BID LOVE STAY?

✓
WHY bid love stay beyond the day
Or dure beyond the morrow?
There's naught can stay with yea or nay
This joy that touches sorrow.

But he who gives love with both hands
May, ere he part, discover
One who doth wend a passing friend
Turn everlasting lover.

BLACK DEATH

HE gave her neither rest nor peace
Until his lips drew her sweet breath,—
But while she drooped against his breast
A Third stood at their side, Black Death.

And when the lover went his way,
Invisible and hollow-eyed
Into his castle followed him
That Shape, and brought to naught his
pride.

The castle lights shone pale and dim.
They bore the lover on his bier—
The peasant maiden kissed his eyes
And the Black Angel followed her.

The Lord sent down a Form of Light
To ask Death why he smote unbid. . . .
Death answered the eight-winged messenger,
His face in his black mantle hid—

"True love bound prince and peasant maid;
Yet Rank forbade the marriage-tie . . .
But now they can be happy both:
The Grave knows neither Low nor High!"

HASTEN, CLASP MAIDEN LIFE

HASTEN, clasp Maiden Life round her
white waist,
And drink in, loverlike, her perfumed breath,
For in the night death waits us—we must taste
The bony and the lipless kiss of Death!

THE LIVE CONSCIENCE

THE dead man lay beneath the mold,
But still his spirit knew
The soft stir of each blade of grass
As toward the sun it grew;

He heard the far-flung church bells ring,
He heard the joyous sound
Of children's voices, as they played
Above, on April ground;—
And he felt the little, red-tipped worm
Go nosing round and round.

He felt the winter rain drip down;
It ached against his bones—
And his was not a plight where one
Might ease oneself with groans,

For he had to lie forever dumb
There in the dreadful tomb

Till all the graves gaped open wide
At the crashing Trump of Doom,

Till interminable time had flown
And the universe grew gray,
Ere the finger of Eternity
Would touch his eyes with day.

He could not move, he could not weep,
Nor might one finger strive
To lift itself; he could not sleep,
For his conscience kept alive;

His dreadful conscience kept alive,
(Oblivion held no term)
And it preyed upon his spirit worse
Than midnight or the worm:

O, if this be what men call "death,"
I do not wish to die
Till the sun goes out like an unfilled lamp,
And God folds up the sky!

THE PAGAN SAINT

FROM this rock-girdled high
 These twenty barren years
Have I beheld the sun
Drop like a golden bird
Adown the smould'ring West,
Have I beheld the stars
In their blue paths o'erhead
Resume their solemn march
Thro' concaves vast of sky—
Have watched the glowing East,
A hollow shell of fire,
Suffuse with gradual pearl
And burst to flower of day:—
And, dawn on radiant dawn,
And, eve on roseal eve,
The melody of birds
Has mounted up to me
From coverts close of green;
And fragrances of flowers,
And scents of field and wood,
Have oft assailed my sense

With mem'ries of that Time
When Pagan ways I walked,
Before the White-souled Christ
Redeemed me from the World. . . .
And, pity me, O God!—
Last night, just ere the stars
Faded to ghosts of light
At the first touch of Dawn,
Methought Apollo stood
Bright with eternal youth,
And golden, as of yore,
Midmost a cloven cloud
Of oblique-billowing fleece—
“Awake! Awake!” he cried,
“Lo! where Olympus looms
Athwart the azure space
Of heaven, as of old!
Still Jove’s ambrosial locks
Shake thunder thro’ the world
And my immortal hand
Plucks music from the lyre;
And hamadryads, still,
And dryads of the wood,
And fountain-dwelling nymphs
Inhabit grove and flood—
But Blindness and a Night
Have fallen upon men!” . . .

Ah, pity me, Lord God,
At those crag-echoed words
My penance seemed a shame
Thrust on me 'gainst my will,
And, for purpureal robes,
And rose-crowned bowls of wine,
And all of Youth's glad things
That I for Thee flung by,
My Soul yearned, hungering! . . .
Ah, and it seemed that all
That I had deemed a Rock
Dropt from beneath my feet,
And, like a crumbling mist
Of fading pearl and gold,
Thy Heaven fell to naught,
And I was left with Naught! . . .

Have mercy on my Soul,
For I am weak, O God,
Thou Triune God in One! . . .
When fled that evil dream
And, wakening, I beheld
These twilit crags about,
I, meager-fleshed and wan,
I fain had ta'en my staff
With purpose to descend
And leave this desolate life

(Desolate but for Thee)—
To knock with palsied hand
At the shut Door of Youth,
And beg a Miracle:
That I might enter in
And live Life's Bloom again. . . .
But now my rose is dust
And, ah, it may not be! . . .

PEACE, PEACE

PEACE, peace, broken heart, peace!
All these grievous things must cease,
They will drop off one by one
Like ripe fruit in a quiet sun.
Thine enemies shall be no more,
Thy mockers will forget their lore,
The flowers from the mead will die
And God's great hands will break the sky.
Nothing that's evil but will cease
Under His whisper of Peace, Peace.
All shall drop off one by one
Like ripe fruit in a quiet sun . . .
Yea, e'en thy cruel Love will lie
A dead thing beneath a dead sky.

THE PAINTED LADY

I AM sick of lust," the Painted Lady said,
"Of the perfumed sheets of a barren bed,
Of the passion I feign tho' I feel it not,
Of the outward bloom and the inward rot."
The Harlot laughed a hungry laugh—
"Never the joys of a mother I quaff,
For my love is a thing that is not of love,
And bitter the wine as the lees thereof.
Though the touch of my lips be heavenly sweet,
Hell's dragons coil about my feet,
And the seventy curses of hell I give,
For I've got to live, I've got to live!
I am the cowboy's passing bride,
Am mistress of him who masters the tide,
Am the dear delight of the workman's life
Whose wages can never support a wife.
I slake men's ravening desire
As I burn thro' mankind as a fire—
Yet I stand in God's eyes censure-free
For the selfsame flame consumeth me.
I am the obverse face of love

With marriage the other side thereof,
And I and the Bride together join
In the sexual mold of a single coin,
For the full-leaved bulk of the marriage-tree
Roots in the dung and mulch of me. . . .
And, maidens who boast the purest white,
'Tis I who save you from Lust's despite,
'Tis I preserve you without a flaw
Till you go and lie with a man by law . . .
But I'm sick of LIFE," the Painted Lady said,
"And I would to God that I were dead!"

THE CONTRAST

WITH ripples of blinding fire all Broadway
 wavered ashine,
And taxicabs streamed by like great black
 beetles in line,
When into my being she stepped,—she, like a
 goddess, aglow
In an exquisite clinging gown,—I, in my rags
 and woe!
Was she the mate of the thing brutish, bloated
 and old?—
I opened the taxi for them and into the night
 they rolled.
She touched my heart like a flower and made
 the world grow sweet:
He tossed me a silver coin . . . I let it lie in
 the street . . .

QUICK AND DEAD

✓
FROM the trouble and strife of life set free,
He lay in the grave. "Thank God,"
thought he.

Just then two lovers murmured o'erhead . . .
"Would that I were alive!" he said.

LOVE IN OLD MEXICO

I DREAMED of ships sailing across the sun
Cargoed with allspice and with cinnamon,
Of trogons flaming forth from tropic groves,
Of moist airs breathing sandalwood and cloves,
Of black-mawed caverns gulping bristling seas,
And winds a-whisper with strange melodies,
Quetzals of gold and green and purple stain,
Colossal cities strewn along the plain,
Of haunted forests full of twilight sheen
Where print of mortal foot hath never been,
Where black despairs the dreamer ever woo—
And thro' them all there gleamed the face of
you.

SHE CAME FROM HER NARROW BED

SHE came from her narrow bed:
"As cold as stones are my feet,
And, Love, there is no lustihead
In a wormy winding-sheet."

'Twas thus she coaxed his spirit forth.
They mixed like clouds in a storm,
And for the space of a passing dream
He fostered her chill form.

THE SONG OF RED RILEY

I HAVE a girl in the East,
A Girl in the West,
And between the two, God wot,
I know not which is best.

I have a girl in the North,
And one in the South—
But the sweetest lass of all,
She bit blood from my mouth.

PRITHEE, STRIVE NOT

PRITHEE, strive not to remember
Ancient love burnt out and dead;
Blow not on the blackened ember,—
Ash will ne'er again give red.

Lift the latch—another lover
Waits upon thy kiss without:
All the old things have gone over
That the heart went mad about.

MY LADY'S BATH

O THE sky hung dark and shaded
And the winds were ill at rest,
And the slow black clouds paraded
Heavily from east to west—

When my Lady's whim did strip her
Pure and soft as she was born,
Off she drew each small gold slipper
By a bare bush harsh with thorn.

Then the sun his eyes unclouded
With the right arm of a gale
And a rainbow arched and prouder
Like a peacock's spreading tail.

(See! The questing wind reposes,
Boughs to green-leaved bourgeon stir,
And the thorn-bush blushes roses
At the pearl-white glimpse of her.)

FICKLENESS

I LOVED . . . I lost . . . "The very
world,"

Thought I, "must cease to be;
June, find no pleasure in her rose,
Since She no more loves me!"

But when I saw the world still glad
With sun and flower and rain,
That June had not forgot her rose—
I straightway loved again.

MY GYPSY MAID

I KNOW a gypsy maiden and she travels in
a van:

I think she loves me better than the shiftless
gypsy man.

She reads cards with the best of them, she
pierces with her eyes.

Her voice is low and very sweet and quick with
love-replies.

She has a touch of starlight and she knows the
sun and moon.

Her breasts are full and ample as red roses
late in June.

And I've told her that I love her . . . And I
guess she understands

(Her red lips drooped a-quiver, there was
trembling in her hands,

This little Gypsy maiden that travels in a van)

That I'll make a better husband than a loafing
Gypsy Man.

THE DECEIT

ON the way to Istral where the sea sweeps
in

I met and kissed a maiden irresistible as sin;
Her breasts were tipped like coral and her un-
bound hair

Hung thick across her bosom, and her face was
fair.

I lay with her a night-space in the white moon-
shine

And wakened in the morning like a drunkard
after wine . . .

I wakened in the morning with a lover's greed
For renewal of embracement . . . and em-
braced a weed

And a length of blackened driftwood. . . .

Then I rose afraid,

For a witch, God wot, had snared me in the
semblance of a maid!

KANSAS

GIVE me the land where miles of wheat
Ripple beneath the wind's light feet,
Where the green armies of the corn
Sway in the first sweet breath of morn;
Give me the large and liberal land
Of the open heart and the generous hand.
Under the widespread Kansas sky
Let me live and let me die.

THE LITTLE BROOK OVER THE HILL

THE little brook over the hill that my child-
hood knew
Where fragrant mint and slender willows
grew—
Like vanishing flashes of light the minnows
swam
In its rippled shallows. I mind me the drip-
ping dam

Builded of logs and stones and sod breast-high,
Where the brimming waters stole a patch of the
sky
And we splashed 'mid clouds and parted watery
trees,
And shouted and leaped, and raced at naked
ease.
I believe in dryads and nymphs and satyrs still
Because of the little brook at the foot of the
hill.

How it flashed a thousand bickering gleams in
 one
When it caught the full effulgence of the sun.
How it teemed with life: for a thousand tribes
 dwelt there,
Curious, delicate, purple, and argent-fair—
The dragon fly that poised on a rippling blade
Of grass, unnumbered creatures of sun and
 shade,
Wee lives that throve under stones and scur-
 ried away
When a wanton hand let in a storm of the
 day—
Claw, and fin, and scale, and shell, and gill,
There was life a-swarm in the little brook over
 the hill.

The little brook over the hill—I wandered
 away,
And then, grown taller of life, came back one
 day,
And I found they had taken my little brook
 over the hill
To turn the roaring wheels of a smoky mill;
Blue-bursting bubbles, circle-wise swimming,
 had slain

The teeming lives of which my heart had been
fain—

Only belligerent crayfish here and there
Fought on for being; and willows draggled and
bare

Strove for the sun; the trees were shrunken
and wried

And all the beautiful little lives had died. . . .

And I cursed the greedy world and the ruthless
mill

That had swept with death the little brook over
the hill.

THE STAMPEDE

THE lightning tossed its tangled boughs
And great winds ran about:
At midnight all the cattle rose
And took to sudden rout.

And, whirled in seething floods of rain,
We followed in their wake,
While ebbed and surged the driving storm
Like waves which lift and break.

Mad was the night and mad the flight;
We prayed beneath our breath—
For, 'mid that sea of tossing horns,
Beneath those hoofs, lay death.

Then in the same mysterious way
They paused as they began . . .
And down our backs the trickling drops
In ceaseless rivulets ran,

As round and round the herd we rode
For hour on hour of rain,
Singing them songs of lusty cheer
Lest they should rise again.

AH, SWEET THE BIRDS

AH, sweet the birds are singing, and mead
and shaw are green;
The sky shines like a mirror, by winds and rain
washed clean;
The flocks are out to pasture, the world wends
two by two;
The sheety mill-pond captures high noon's re-
motest blue,
And even in the city I wot that sparrows sing,
And sickly shoots of leafage take color of the
spring—
And universal gladness in every heart doth call
And laughs, and knows no reason. . . . God,
how I hate it all!

WINTER

The Jersey Coast

ALONG the river's level sheet of ice
Gray sea-gulls gather, lift, and light
again;
Shining and hard with solid glaze of sleet
Lie marsh and meadow; here and there a bird,
Deceived by three days' sunshine, pecks in vain
For sustenance, or droops on icy bough.
And blank with boarded window, by the shore,
Mid dreary waste of rime-encrusted dune
Loom hostelries whose summer guests have
flown.

IN A STORM

[*On the Bark "Pestallosi"*]

UPON this great ship's tilted deck
I stand, an undiscerned speck,
And, where the vast, wave-whitened sea
Leaps at the moon enormously
In green-ridged tides, the ship's expanse
Dwindles to insignificance.
Thro' ether, perilously hurled,
Thunders the huge bulk of the world,
Which, in the eyes of other spheres,
Itself a sunlit mote appears.
In turn, all suns and stars in sight
Lessen to needle-pricks of light,
Flung helpless thro' an awful void
Where measures fail, and Time's destroyed . . .
And still dost see when sparrows die?
O God, where art Thou? . . . Here am I!

INSOUCIANCE IN STORM

[*On the Ore-Boat "Howe"*]

DEEP in an ore-boat's hold
Where great-bulked boilers loom
And yawning mouths of fire
Irradiate the gloom,

I saw half-naked men
Made thralls to flame and steam,
Whose bodies, dripping sweat,
Shone with an oily gleam.

There, all the sullen night,
While waves boomed overhead
And smote the lurching ship,
The ravenous fires they fed;

They did not think it brave:
They even dared to joke! . . .
I saw them light their pipes
And puff calm rings of smoke! . . .

I saw a Passer sprawl
Over his load of coal—
At which a Fireman laughed
Until it shook his soul:

*All this in a hollow shell
Whose half-submerged form
On Lake Superior tossed
'Mid rushing hills of storm!*

EVENING ON LAKE SUPERIOR

L IKE to a molten globe which workers turn,
Of crimson-heated steel, the sinking sun
Dropped to the far blue level of the lake
And laid a burning causeway o'er the waves.
Then in the russet twilight sable clouds
Sat here and there, sprinkled with little stars—
Thus darkness came, and, a red light to port,
A green to starboard, at the cable's end
Our shadowy tow-boat followed in our wake.

WEIN, WEIB——!

[*The Complaint of the Old Lakeman*]

TOO old em I to sail eny more
 (He glanced at his wasted thews)
But I might uv been on the Lakes to-day
W'ere the whistles talks an' the fog hangs gray
 If it hadunt 'a been fer booze.

If it hadunt a' been fer booze an' whores
 (By rights this is my Prime)
O, the road is broad—but it don't go far,
Fer, no matter how good a man you are,
 They'll git you every time!

A SAILOR CHANTEY

[*On Bark "Pestallozi," off Tristan D'Acunha
Islands*]

SIX hearty husky lads were we,
Able to cope with storm and sea.
O, the deck reeled drunken beneath our feet,
And the sky and ocean seemed to meet.
*Hear, landsmen meek, who thrive and wive,
We climbed up, six,—and we came down, five!*
For the grim wind thro' the ratlines roared
And hurled our comrade overboard.
He fell headlong to the maniac sea,
Tumbling and grappling vacantly.
The black horizon seemed to grin,
And a high wave rose to welcome him in.
The next day, when the storm was o'er,
The sea was as smooth as a dance-hall floor
. . .

For days our comrade floated about,
And the sea-gulls pecked his blue eyes out;

For days he floated with eyeless stare,
And the small fish nibbled his white bones
bare,—

Then he bubbled down thro' the surgeless deep
To sleep where the cuttlefish sprawl and creep.

We vowed when we reached the land, why then,
We'd never go to sea again—
But we blew in all our cash ashore,
And here we are to sea once more!

BOB

BOB had a nigger woman
That kicked and bit like a horse
More jungle-wild than human . . .
She knifed him in due course . . .

Bob had a nigger woman:
She knifed him till he died . . .
For six whole days she wouldn't eat . . .
For seven more she cried! . . .

THE BOXCAR

I SING the boxcar rumbling and rolling afar,
 Rocking o'er prairies, clacking thro' populous towns,
Laboring up long grades, griding down valleys,
Marked for repairs, groaning with merchandise,
Side-tracked, bumped about, loaded, reloaded again,
Dusty and serviceable, the greatest traveler of all,
Habitat of hoboes, chalked with their marks and scrawls—

I sing the side-door Pullman, the changing vistas,
The shifting panoramas of countryside,
The waving fields, the farms, the villages.
Away with your cushioned seats, your palace cars
And the highfalutin names they wear on their sides!

Give me the boxcar, having no name at all,
Only a number—and give me a true-blue pal
To dare the ups and downs of the Road with
me.

A TRAMP'S CONFESSION

WE huddled in the mission
Fer it was cold outside,
An' listened to the preacher
Tell of the Crucified;

Without, a sleety drizzle
Cut deep each ragged form,—
An' so we stood the talkin'
Fer shelter from the storm.

They sang of God an' angels,
An' heaven's eternal joy,
An' things I stopped believin'
When I was still a boy;

They spoke of good an' evil,
An' offered savin' grace—
An' some showed love fer mankin'
A-shinin' in their face,

An' some their graft was workin'
The same as me an' you:
But most was urgin' on us
Wot they believed was true.

We sang an' dozed an' listened,
But only feared, us men,
The time when, service over,
We'd have to mooch again

An' walk the icy pavements
An' breast the snowstorm gray
Till the saloons was opened
An' there was hints of day.

So, when they called out "Sinners,
Won't you come!" I came . . .
But in my face was pallor
An' in my heart was shame . . .
An' so fergive me, Jesus,
Fer mockin' of thy name—

Fer I was cold an' hungry!
They gave me grub an' bed
After I kneeled there with them
An' many prayers was said.

An' so fergive me, Jesus,
I didn't mean no harm—
An' outside it was zero,
An' inside it was warm . . .

Yes, I was cold an' hungry,—
An', O Thou Crucified,
Thou friend of all the Lowly,
Fergive the lie I lied!

BREAD LINES

GOOD God! What keeps men up so late
upon this dripping night
When every rain-wet paving stone shines with
its blur of light
Caught from the white electric arc? The wind
is blowing chill,
No human foot would wend abroad save at
some master's will . . .
And these men have a master terribler than
mortal lord,
Whose pity might be wakened and whose mercy
be implored;
The lord of them is Hunger fell who whips
them as they go,—
With dreadful scourge of famine he insults
them, blow on blow.
They turn and twist in silent line and shuffle
hopeless feet
In solemn drear procession down the shadow-
haunted street

They tramp along while other folk are safe
and warm in bed;
They move in line for half a night to gain
their dole of bread,
And hunger makes them patient of the cold,
the sleet, the rain,—
But every weary step they take finds echo in
the brain,
And the heart becomes the pavement, and it
spirts with jets of pain.

Ye masters, why must this thing be? Is this
the exacted price
(This sordidness and misery and poverty and
vice)
For every upward step Man takes along the
sunlit way?
Why must these edges of the night still fringe
the rear of day?
The masters answer nothing: they will neither
hear nor see;
They play, with men as checkers, at their game
of usury;
They reap where they have never toiled, they
sell the unsown grain,
They make the worker moil for them nor heed
his cry of pain.

Their tasks are busy idleness which sow no
good for men,

They spread their nets and catch their fish and
spread their nets again—

But shadowy bread lines throng my heart and
whisper, stern and low,

“Some day they’ll have to answer us, whether
they will or no!”

A BED

I'M glad I have a good warm bed to snuggle
in to-night
For the winds are in the alleys and the stars are
cold and bright.
I'm glad I do not have to tramp along the
paven street,
A-tremble with the bitter blasts which numb
and freeze the feet.
But I'm sorry for the others that must wander
to and fro
And suffer as I had to do not many months
ago;
I think of them, the thousands, in the bitter,
bitter dark
Who move alone along the street with none
but God to mark,
For tho' inured to many shames my heart can
ne'er endure
The misery and hardship of the ever-patient
Poor.

I've dozed by dying camp-fires and waked shuddering in the night,

Have seen the shining Zodiac depart, ere dawn,
from sight,

Full oft I've slept in city jails where Vice was
gathered in

And each man hugged the nightmare of his own
peculiar sin;

And I've slept in side-tracked boxcars while the
heartless winter lay

By my side, a cold companion, till a storm begot
the day. . . .

So I'm glad I have a good warm bed to snuggle
in to-night,

For the winds are in the alleys and the stars are
cold and bright.

THE OPEN WORLD

I AM swept with the storm of life,
I shake and sway like a tree—
For all the winds of all the world
Sweep over me.

I toss my boughs to the clouds
That drive high over my head.
Right glad am I for the open sky
Where tempests are bred.

REVOLT

ACCEPT, and the world moves with you,
Revolt, and you walk alone,
But sweet it is both night and day
To know that your soul's your own—

That the open sky is above you,
That your ways are free and bold,
That *you're* not one of the timid sheep
That cower in the fold.

THE HARVEST FLY'S COMPLAINT

WHEN the sun stares hot, unsparing, like
a lidless golden eye,
I labor, dusty, sweating,—whom they call the
harvest fly.
The header-box runs up and down and fills
with slippery wheat.
I leap about and ply the fork, all arms and
hands, and feet.
I'm up before the dawn, nor rest before the
moon rides high—
And they couldn't do without me, tho' they call
me harvest fly.

The farmers and the papers send out lying
calls for me:
Where they say they need a hundred they have
work for two or three.
Then I flit in, brown and mothlike, and for-
gather with my kind

In some little town far Westward open to each
prairie wind:

And the farmers come to hire me; but by that
time park and street

Teem with hundreds who have listened to the
siren call of Wheat,—

So they beat me down in wages, give as little
as they can,

And if I get indignant they go hire another
man.

But the harvest doesn't last for long—the stub-
ble bristles brown,

The wheat's all cut and stacked, and then I
hike on back to town,

And try to catch a freight and leave, but find
they've closed down tight

On letting hoboes beat their way, and jug them
left and right.

They were glad enough to get me here, but,
now the work is done,

The Law must steal what I have earned be-
neath the broiling sun,

The Court must have its share in fines (I tell
a common tale),

And they haul me off for vagrancy and clap
me into jail.

And, Pard, I'm getting sick of it—the way they
treat us men,

And, sometimes, I make up my mind I won't
go back again—

But then I get a vision of those rolling miles
of grain,

Of the lines of marching trees that make a
wind-break on the plain,

And I'm off before I know it, peering from a
boxcar door:

*Though I know that I am in for being done as
heretofore!*

WHITE SHEETS

NOW that white sheets have held me
For many a wakeful night
Convention's bonds have spelled me,
And slain is my delight. . . .

But several nights by camp-fire
And several dawns by dew
Will make another creature,
My shrivelled soul, of you.

CASHING IN

I CAUGHT a glimpse of his frightened face
as he fell between the cars,
And I made a jump for the cinder path and I
saw all kinds of stars.
I rolled like a log in a cataract, then, staggering
to my feet,
I sat me down on a railroad tie and my nerve
was gone complete.

The two red lights of the little caboose shrank
into the gulping night,
And I thanked the Dark for covering up the
Terror from my sight.
Dim woodlands haunted the high-banked track
like black clouds dropped from the sky,
And over my head a screech owl wheeled with
a wild and dismal cry.
'Twas a five-mile drill to the nearest town, and
I hit a nervous gait,
And said to the operator there, "A bum fell
under a freight."

O, my chum cashed in like a feeble match
quenched by a gust of wind,
Or as a flickering fire goes out which hoboos
leave behind.

No more he'll stretch across the rods or ride
the cramped brake-beam,
A thrall to the lure of the unseen land and the
fascination of steam,—

For they've laid him away in a rough pine box
on the slope of a barren hill—

But out across the universe his spirit wanders
still:

He has mooched it on from star to star, and
from sun to flaming sun,

He has taken the planets like strings of beads
and slipped them, one by one,

Along the cord of memory, for he who knew
the earth

Must learn the universe as well on the eve of
his second birth . . .

And when he kneels before the Throne, his
hunger for seeing filled,

And the grand antiphonies of the sky to hear
his doom are stilled—

Prone there between the avenues of the flaming
cherubim—

I know that the One who pardoned the Thief
will be merciful to him!

THE CATTLEMAN'S BURIAL

[*S. S. Maori King, South Seas*]

WE bore our comrade from his bunk, we
 kept him overnight,
In a fold of heavy canvas we sewed him good
 and tight—
With stitch on stitch we sewed him in and hid
 him from the sight . . .
We laid him on a tilted plank, and solemn-
 souled were we. . . .
Behind us whirled the troubled wake, around
 us spread the sea—
And then each man removed his hat and stood
 with down-sunk head
As the dapper little captain read the service for
 the dead.

Said the Boss of all the cattlemen, "I'm glad
 it isn't me
Wot 'as to lie so lonesome at the bottom o'
 the sea."

And *I* looked out across the waves which ran
in crests of foam,
And longed for fields, and running brooks, and
all my friends, and home.

AWAY FROM TOWN

HIGH-PERCHED upon a boxcar, I speed,
I speed, to-day:
I leave the gaunt gray city some good green
miles away,
A terrible dream in granite, a riot of streets
and brick,
A frantic nightmare of people until the soul
grows sick—
Such is the high gray city with the live green
waters round
Oozing up from the ocean, slipping in from
the Sound.
I'd put up down in the Bowery for nights in a
ten-cent bed
Where the dinky "L" trains thunder and rattle
overhead;
I'd traipsed the barren pavements with the pain
of frost in my feet;
I'd sidled to hotel kitchens and asked for some-
thing to eat.

✓ But when the snow went dripping and the young
spring came as one

Who weeps because of the winter, laughs be-
cause of the sun,

I thought of a limpid brooklet that bickers
thro' reeds all day,

And made a streak for the ferry, and rode
across in a dray,

And, dodging into the Erie where they bunt
the boxcars round,

I peeled my eye for detectives, and boarded an
outward bound.

For you know when a man's been cabined in
walls for part of the year,

He longs for a place to stretch in, he hankers
for country cheer.

THE CATTLE TRAIN

THEY drive the helpless cattle in
 With oaths and cries and blows . . .
The train draws eastward while the dusk
 Is all a dying rose.

Behind, our little waycar rides,
 Twin-lighted, while ahead
The engine fires the gulping gloom
 With burst on burst of red.

Strange is the cargo that we bear:
 We've gleaned from pen and byre
Leg-sprawling calves and huddled sheep
 And swine that reek of mire,

Wild, frightened steers from Western plains,
 That bellow, push, and lower—
A Stockyard leaping through the night
 At forty miles an hour.

GOD, THE ARCHITECT

WHO thou art I know not,
But this much I know:
Thou hast set the Pleiades
In a silver row;

Thou hast sent the trackless winds
Loose upon their way;
Thou hast reared a colored wall
'Twixt the night and day;

Thou hast made the flowers to blow,
And the stars to shine,
Hid rare gems and richest ore
In the tunneled mine—

But, chief of all thy wondrous works,
Supreme of all thy plan,
Thou hast put an upward reach
In the heart of Man!

I SAW A NAKED SOUL

I SAW a naked soul
Crying in the dark.
Its little outstretched hands
Reached dumbly at my heart.
"Who art thou?" I asked.
"Knowest thou not?" it said,
"Thy little unborn son!"
And then I woke, alone,
And hungered after her,
Its mother yet to be
Whom I had never seen.

THE POLTERGEIST

A WEAK, diaphanous spirit wavered in
Like blue columnar incense mounting
thin—

“There is no comfort in our Way,” it cried,
“We are as naught; would God I had not died!
For now, a bodiless thing, I wander lone,
Divorced from vigorous thew and bracing bone.
O, that firm flesh once more this mist might
seal,

O, that I might the warm blood coursing feel—
That I might call some body ‘I’ again,
And, locked within five senses, walk with men,
Potent to love, to hate, resent, forgive,
To live the brief, sweet life I once did live,
Not forced to borrow, in a ghost’s despair,
The Medium’s strength with which to tip a
chair,

Talk through a horn, or lift a table high!”

“Ah, Spirit, how I tremble! Say, must I
After this life know like futility?”

HYMN OF THE STAR-FOLK TO GOD

THERE is no need for thy mercy, for mercy
 is ours, not thine;
Thou art as impartial as suns that burn or as
 stars that shine,
In all infinity dwelling, with star-seas a-wash
 at thy feet
While the tides of the systems in storm round
 the bounds of eternity beat.
As deep as from zenith to nadir are thy ways
 and the glory thereof—
Though we call thee Father and Love, thou
 art greater than fathers and love.
All the gods we have fashioned to limn thee,
 all the fine-threaded logic we've spun
Do no more measure thy glory than darkness
 measures the sun—
While we lurk and lie in the night-time lapped
 round in the silence of sleep,
A hint of thy power is given by Deep beyond
 star-sprinkled Deep,
And a mote of thy infinite glory our pitiful
 selfhood stuns

When we find that the suns in our eyesight are
a grain of sand to thy suns,
Thy millions and billions and trillions of sys-
tems where mayhap abide
More God-seeking beings, by whom, as by us,
thou art deified.
When our last day sickens in dusking crimson
and crumbling gold
Our night will be as thy morning (Thou ART,
nor canst thou wax old)
So sunset is ever as sunrise to nations which
gaze from afar—
So sunrise and sunset are single if eyes could
look down from a star.
Thou hast lived through a million judgments,
seen a million systems die,
And still, like to young roses blushing, thy new
suns redden the sky,
Thy new suns redden the sky while thine Old
go ruinous way—
Yea, somewhere, ever, in heaven, some world
has its judgment day,
And, somewhere, ever, in heaven, some new
world blooms in thy sight—
And there is no end to creation, as there is no
end to thy might.

O God beyond effort of language, O God beyond reach of the tongue!

O God who canst only be felt in the soul's sanctuary, not sung!

We know thou art better than best and wiser than wisest, we trust

Thee, and worship unto thee, who art as in wind is the dust!

We earth-peoples, star-peoples, dwelling in populous spaces of sky—

We, strangely living and loving, seek thee in spirit—and die!—

Yet we know that not for naught, since thou art thou, are we here!

With thy more-than-love above us, about us, we never need fear!

THE STILLBORN IN HEAVEN

IN the beautiful garden of paradise, where
the souls of the blessed go,
I saw in dream a multitude which wended to
and fro,
And their mouths were filled with heavenly
speech beyond all mortal phrase
As they walked where the crystal fount of life
in gleaming column plays:
But One I saw who fared alone and bore a
flame for his heart,
Like a stranger in a foreign land who lives and
moves apart;
And yet the face of the radiant Soul was bright
as a noonday sun,—
And I drew a-nigh to question it, the Lonely
and Lovely One.
“Oh, wherefore, pray,” I asked of It, “Do you
not join yonder throng
Whom the healing touch of eternity has wak-
ened into song?”

"I am neither of Heaven, nor, yet, of earth,"
The Shining Spirit said,

"With pangs and cries I was born last night,
and died in my mother's bed!"

THE SONG OF THE PYRAMID-
BUILDERS

WE lived below the Elephantine
In a papyrus-wattled village,
And swung aloof the long shadoof
Above our shelves of tillage.

But Pharaoh came with swords and spears,
To sound of flute and tabor:
For many slaves had sought their graves,
And he was short of labor.

They marched us over leagues of sand,
Away from wife and chattel,
And grew we faint or made complaint
They pricked us on like cattle.

Then, 'neath the overseer's eye,
And to the lashes' crackle,
We heaved away from day to day
With bar, and block, and tackle,

And from our ears the blood gushed out,
And cheeks grew ashen-hollow,—
And if we lagged or the taut ropes sagged
The lash was sure to follow,—

And some of us fell with twitching loins
And died of our endeavor—
And the lash forbore; we could no more
If they beat on forever.

So week by week they dragged us off,
And bore us in a lighter
Adown the Nile, poor carrion-pile;
They soaked us well in nitre,

And tossed us in the mummy-pit,
Bones cased in skin like leather . . .
But, some great day, the prophets say,
We'll all rise up together,

And meet our slayers face to face
Before the God who made us—
Then woe to him who crushed the limb,
And woe to him who flayed us!

SONG OF A FAIRY WIFE

I THRIVE on moonbeams dipt in dew;
My drink is clover wine;
My dress I sew of morning gauze
With needles from the pine.

My husband is a robber bold,
He waylays lab'ring bees
And robs them of the golden store
They carry down the breeze;

He lurks amid the moving grass,
A wasp's sting is his sword;
The scrambling beetle's burnished back
He valiantly doth board,

And breaks him to the webbed rein . . .
We have a garden, too,
Where blossom flowerets so small
That they escape man's view.

Above our little cottage roof
 There bends a blade of grass,
And by our door ant caravans
 In long brown columns pass.

Nor do we envy gods, or men,
 Or purple pomp of kings;
Enough the glory and the joy
 We find in little things.

LILITH

THE fiercest Demon-Shape in hell
Was Lilith fell,
Was Lilith fell,
Which rose a sudden dream to tell the dusk
Lord Lucifer.
"I saw" ('twas said) "From heaven late
In golden state
Thro' star-hinged gate
The servants of the God I hate
Down into Chaos stir.

I deem that He would make a world,
Another world,
(His millionth world)
(Red lips in demon-laughter curled)
Thus at our Fall He planned.
"Then give me Form again" ('twas prayed)
"Wherewith to invade
Its garden-shade—'
Then leaped the demon to a maid
Beneath satanic wand!

So Lilith once more went the ways,
The rose-red ways,
The golden ways . . .
She scorned like Eve to drop her days full ripe
 in Adam's hand.
Her every laugh was Adam's snare,
And, unaware,
Her whims he bare . . .
In a gold fowling net of hair
She caught him, strand on strand.

Like to the ligure were her eyes,
Her prescient eyes,
Her subtle eyes,
Which, young for ten eternities, on former
 worlds had wooed.
Adam she taught forbidden lore
And what of yore
In love she bore
On many a weird world before
And Eden-solitude.

And so God made Eve to be born
(First woman born,
And strangely born—
From a man's writhen body torn)

He said, "Now it shall be
That Eve will Adam save from her
Whose dropping myrrh
Of speech doth stir
His soul within him to defer
In that which pleaseth me."

(Already had the war begun,
Dread war begun,
Dire war begun
Between the Serpent and the Son, for other
worlds afar
Had felt the dreadful thing creep in
And ancient sin
Had set its gin
To trap Edenic souls therein
On many a passèd star.

And as the night pursues the day,
The orient day,
The risen day,
The Hosts of Hell for aye and aye followed
the feet of God . . .
Where He world-specked the Infinite
As locusts flit
In swarms they lit
And bit, and cankered where they bit,
And shore of herb his sod.

And to each world the Christ came down,
From heaven came down,
From God came down,
With miracles of great renown to disconcert
the Wise—
Ten thousand times was crucified,
And groaned and died,
With spear-pierced side,
To ope the gates of heaven wide
And thwart the Prince of Lies)

So, tho' that Eve were white and fair,
Most lily fair,
Most starry-fair,
Adam yet dreamed of Lilith's hair, yea, being
Sire of men,
He yearned for her small kissèd face,
And her embrace
Of elder days
Made all that leafy garden-place
Seem now a noisome fen.

Still . . . God's great soul-faith doth not
fail! . . .
(Tho' old the tale
It did not fail) . . .

His seraphs thro' the starry hail again Christ's
 galleon oar,
And once more must the God-Man die,
Must leave the sky,
Be nailed on high,
Must know afresh old agony—
To save a world once more!

THE SONG OF ISRAFEL

THE poet-seraph Israfel, chief player on
the lyre—

I dreamed he came to me last night with words
like leaping fire,—

Then Time became Eternity, then grew my
vision whole:

I took His hand; He led me forth to God, a
naked soul!

I saw a boundless universe where worlds of
souls do find

Freedom to bend and guide their growth as
after God's own mind;

The frightful night flashed full of suns as thick
as sparks, when fall

A city's roofs in, beam on beam, wall upon
crashing wall—

Around them little jeweled worlds like emer-
ald insects drove

Which spread and close in phalanx small within
some shady grove.

From heaven's awful parapets I viewed the
mighty scene

While rose the Seraph's silver voice majestic
and serene:

"God's eye, alone, can count these suns (He
knows nor space nor bound),

And tributary worlds, alive with beings, gird
them round;

And thro' all space, from Deep to Deep, above
the blinded throng,

Great poets coin their labored thought into
golden song,

And sculptors chip the stubborn stone, and artists dream, and dare

To give the Inner Vision birth with colors rich
and rare;

Musicians woo the Infinite half into finite clasp,
As children reach for butterflies just poised beyond the grasp. . . .

Five peep-holes for the soul has earth . . .
And other worlds have more,

Or not as many . . . Mayhap two, or three
. . . Or half a score. . . .

Some stellar eyes more colors see where larger
spectrums thrill;

On some world's Music's silver sighs a wider
gamut fill:

And thus unnumbered worlds build souls, a
million earths are trod

By other souls, which, in their way, have their
dim dreams of God.

Nor reach ye aught beyond their grasp: your
eyes, too, vague and dim,

Clutch at the rainbow of his face and hanker
after Him.

Strange bodies souls inhabit, sure, round Algol's
sullen suns

Where thro' tremendous-archèd skies the light-
ning skips and runs,

And Alpha of the Centaur thralls what worlds
bizarre and fair?

And who can limn the hidden life that circles
round Altair?

And earths have perished on which God has
builDED up the soul,

While more worlds, thro' eternity, must seek
the selfsame goal!"

No more I heard! The crystal globe of speech
unuttered broke,

The vision faded from my dream, and in the
night I woke;

Yet not in vain the Wonder came—God wot,
my soul had heard

The Song that soars, the Song that leaps, be-
yond the Written Word!

SUSPICION

I SEE no good in anything, but aye the
shadow of an ill,
And behind every windy copse I fear an am-
bush lurking still.
Beneath each simple word well-meant I burrow
for the deep design.
My feet are wary of the springe. I fear the
under-flaming mine.
Nothing there is, as erst of old, that takes my
being sweet and whole. . . .
Nay, this is death instead of life. May God
have mercy on my soul!

IMPENITENCE

I REJOICE that I have sinned,
I am glad that ONCE I cast
All my scruples to the wind—
Thus I gathered life at last.

I am glad that I have gone
Where no honest thing is seen,
Dared the night to feel the dawn
Wash about me large and clean.

All the mystery of ill
Gathered into force in me,
Of all evil I took skill
And it taught me purity.

Nay, there lingers no regret:
I have looked thro' other eyes,
Loosing folly without let
That I might wax folly-wise.

Now with charity I scan
Those who lurk where I have been,
For HIS lips condemn no man,
Who has suffered, who has seen.

IN A CHOP-SUEY JOINT

CLIMB up a flight of darkly-winding stair,
Push through a swinging door, and you
are there.

The ceiling lowers low with strange design
Where fire-mouthed dragons coil and inter-
twine.

The joss-sticks' thin blue vapor creeps about
Like prisoned spirit seeking some way out,
And slipshod waiters shuffle silent by
With rustling garments and quaint-slanted eye.
If you but fold your sight you are away
In some quaint yellow corner of Cathay,
Lost in a garden of hand-monstered trees
And exquisite uncouth barbarities
Where threats a eunuch one-eyed like a star
Towering malignant with a scimitar.

Now the sun-smitten highway, where there
plies
His trade the beggar with self-blinded eyes.

. . .

Now, drowning pastoral matin, woodland
song,

From a great temple booms a brazen gong. . . .

The streets with chattering hordes are over-
sped

Like swarming vermin in a beggar's head;

And, here and there, amongst the long-cued
horde,

A coolie-borne palanquin speaks a Lord. . . .

The spell is broken . . . Here's some tea to
quaff . . .

Hark! from behind yon flower-damasked screen

There breaks a coarse, loud-mouthed, salacious
laugh

Pregnant with goatish lusts and deeds ob-
scene . . .

It is some tawdry prostitute, I guess,

Whose voice betrays her painted wantonness.

LONELINESS

IN my breast a lonely heart
Echoes like a drum of doom,
And one feeble, dim-lit lamp
Glimmers in this gloomy room;
In the topmost of the sky
Shines a solitary star—
O, how separate and lone
All of God's creations are.

THE BIRD OF PARADISE

THOU art perfected splendor without the
 peacock's feet,
And only the manna-dew of heaven thou dost
 eat,
Bird of many colors, kinsman to the dawn,
Richer in rare hues than the iris heaven-drawn!
But sad it is to think that any ruthless clown
With the cunning of a blow-pipe may bring thy
 beauty down.

FISHERMEN

[*The Jersey Coast*]

THEY stand as still as shapes in bronze,
 great-bodied, pipe in mouth;
A slant-stacked steamer trails the sky with
 smoke, against the South;
Far out they watch the toiling tides that lift in
 crests of foam,
Alert to glimpse the rippled stir where schools
 of bluefish roam;
They seldom move, they seldom break the
 fancy of the eye
That makes them seem a common part of earth
 and sea and sky. . . .
A space beyond, the bathing folk along a sand-
 strip run,
And pasty-visaged city groups slouch shaded
 from the sun,—
And, of a sudden, as in dream, on either hand
 I see
The crush and roar of modern life—and Christ
 in Galilee!

A PRAYER

I KNEEL not now to pray that thou
 Make white one single sin,—
I only kneel to thank thee, Lord,
 For what I have not been;

For deeds which sprouted in my heart
 But ne'er to bloom were brought,
For monstrous vices which I slew
 In the shambles of my thought—

Dark seeds the world has never guessed
 By hell and passion bred,
Which never grew beyond the bud
 That cankered in my head.

Some said I was a righteous man—
 Poor fools! The gallow's tree
(If thou hadst let one foot to slip)
 Had grown a limb for me.

So for the Man I might have been
My heart must cease to mourn—
'Twere best to praise the living Lord
For monsters never born,

To bend the spiritual knee
(Knowing myself within)
And thank the kind, benignant God
For what I have not been.

THE STAR OF GOD'S MALISON

HANGING leprous and white in the wide
universe

Was a star done to death by the hand of God's
curse.

Each mount was an island suspended in air,
And petrified hurricanes hung here and there
In impotent menace; whole forests inclined
Were frozen one way by a visible wind;
Like death-shrouded lava the face of the Deep
Paused in green convolutions, in masses did
stand

Along the dread hush of a desolate land.

HELL'S RESURRECTION

THE saffron-colored stars of Hell
 Diminished one by one;
Their lustres into grayness fell—
 The New Age had begun;

And Satan's yellow gonfalons
 Like baleful meteors broke
(Above his seething myrmidons)
 Thro' heaving bulks of smoke,

As at the Gates of Bliss they clung
 In this last hopeless war,
Ere Hell sloped down the void, far-flung,
 Like some dismembered star;

At that same moment every rose
 Forsook its spikèd thorn;
The North put warmth into its snows,
 Nor pushed with boreal horn;

The spider laddered patterns wove
Across the cannon's mouth,
And frankincense and myrrh and clove
Breathed each wind full of South;

The serpent-sinuous wiles of Sin
Assailed the sense no more,
And wine, with bubbling demons in,
To snare the soul forbore.

Mankind was first to cry complaint:
Art lost all hues but white;
Song found no subject but the saint
And dropped its wings ere flight.

There grew no need for Book and Bell,
And churches tumbled in;
From her high honor Virtue fell,
For GOD had vanquished Sin.

A sadness touched e'en Heaven, then,
And shadows of despair;
*No worship mounted up from men,—
And angels live on prayer—*

“Ah, bring back Sin!” The Seraphim
In mystic cadence cried.

“Ah, once more make our sunshine dim
With Death!” Creation sighed.

So Death and Sin took up their way
Among mankind once more,
And Hell burst into dreadful day
As it had flamed of yore!

I SING THE BATTLE

I SING the song of the great clean guns that
belch forth death at will.

Ah, but the wailing mothers, the lifeless forms
and still!

I sing the song of the billowing flags, the bugles
that cry before.

Ah, but the skeletons flapping rags, the lips
that speak no more!

I sing the clash of bayonets and sabers that
flash and cleave.

And wilt thou sing the maimed ones, too, that
go with pinned-up sleeve?

I sing acclaimed generals that bring the victory
home.

Ah, but the broken bodies that drip like honey-
comb!

I sing of hosts triumphant, long ranks of
marching men.

And wilt thou sing the shadowy hosts that
never march again?

THE CONQUERORS

I SAW the Conquerors riding by
With trampling feet of horse and men:
Empire on empire like the tide
Flooded the world and ebbd again;

A thousand banners caught the sun,
And cities smoked along the plain,
And laden down with silk and gold
And heaped-up pillage groaned the wain.

I saw the Conquerors riding by,
Splashing through loathsome floods of war—
The Crescent leaning o'er its hosts,
And the barbaric scimitar,—

And continents of moving spears,
And storms of arrows in the sky,
And all the instruments sought out
By cunning men that men may die!

I saw the Conquerors riding by
 With cruel lips and faces wan:
Musing on kingdoms sacked and burned
 There rode the Mongol Ghengis Khan;

And Alexander, like a god,
 Who sought to weld the world in one;
And Cæsar with his laurel wreath;
 And like a thing from Hell the Hun;

And, leading like a star the van,
 Heedless of upstretched arm and groan,
Inscrutable Napoleon went
 Dreaming of empire, and alone . . .

Then all they perished from the earth
 As fleeting shadows from a glass,
And, conquering down the centuries,
 Came Christ, the Swordless, on an ass!

✓ GEOLOGY

WHAT matter if my life be passed
In laughter or in tears and groans?
Some day, compressed within a rock,
They'll find the lime that made my bones.

VIEWPOINT

WHEN Dante in old Florence walked the
street
(The same whom Beatrice in heaven did greet)
Full many a member of the pygmy clan
Whispered with laughter, "Yon's a crazy
man!"

✓ IN DEBT

EACH man a general debt to mankind owes
For all he is, all he enjoys, and knows,—
And he who dares the least of men to ban
Is just so many stages less a man.

LOVELY CHILD

LOVELY child, make haste to play
While the dew is on your day—
Half a score of years ahead
You will labor for your bread.

PAUL AND OMAR

[They were both tent-makers by trade]

TWO tent-makers in different ages born—
One played a lute, one blew an iron
horn.

One cried that flesh was weak and life was
wrong,

The other, "Only wine and love are strong."

Omar, I share not all thy brimming bowl,
Nor, Paul, would I, like thee, be naught but
soul . . .

Player of careless lute, blower of horn,
I pluck the rose, nor shrink I from the thorn.

MT. RANIER

SNOW-GARMENTED, immense,
And holding audience
With subject clouds, he seems to poise in
air,—
And at his mighty base
An hundred towns find place
And two great cities rival-thewed and fair.

Above him, without bound,
The heavens arch profound,
As loverlike he greets the risen sun.
His diamond-scattered snows
Reflect the golden glows
And purple glooms of eve as day is done.

There mile on mile he shines
Above his ragged pines,
An empire tributary to his view:
Ten thousand wealthy farms,
The blue Sound's gleaming arms,
The distant ocean's wavering edge of blue.

There all the star-hushed night,
Like a great ghost in white,
 He communes with the Spirit of the Dark,
While murmuring below
Life's tides of being flow
 And cities gleam like shards which flash a
 spark.

How many thousand years
Of human hopes and fears
 He's known the sun and stars, no voice may
 tell—
But long ere humankind
Groped slowly into mind
 He hushed primeval forests with his spell.

How many thousand years
Of human hopes and fears
 He yet shall tower! till his slaughtered trees
Have risen far and wide
As homes where folk may bide
 In many smoky cities at his knees.

And then when man is dust
Still with His shoulders thrust

The black cloud-tumult of the storm in
twain!

When Life shall cease to be

He still will greet the sea

Far-flashing monarch of a dead domain.

THE VOICE OF CHRISTMAS

I CANNOT put the Presence by, of Him, the
Crucified,
Who moves men's spirits with His Love as
doth the moon the tide;
Again I see the Life He lived, the godlike
Death He died.

Again I see upon the cross that great Soul-
battle fought,
Into the texture of the world the tale of which
is wrought
Until it hath become the woof of human deed
and thought,—

And, joining with the cadenced bells that all
the morning fill,
His cry of agony doth yet my inmost being
thrill,
Like some fresh grief from yesterday that tears
the heart-strings still.

I cannot put His Presence by, I meet Him
everywhere;
I meet Him in the country town, the busy mar-
ket-square;
The Mansion and the Tenement attest His
Presence there.

Upon the funneled ships at sea He sets His
shining feet;
The Distant Ends of Empire not in vain His
Name repeat,—
And, like the presence of a rose, He makes the
whole world sweet.

He comes to break the barriers down raised
up by barren creeds;
About the globe from zone to zone like sun-
light He proceeds;
He comes to give the World's starved heart
the perfect love it needs,

The Christ Whose friends have played Him
false, Whom Dogmas have belied,
Still speaking to the hearts of men—Tho'
shamed and crucified,
The Master of the Centuries Who will not be
denied!

THE MOTH'S SONG

'TIS good to be the moth that seeks the
flame,
To rush in on it, sudden, from the night—
What tho' I, blackened, perish at the same—
Do I not find the glory of the Light!

THIS PALTRY "I"

AT times I sicken of this paltry "I,"
At times it seems oblivion would be
good. . . .

'Tis hard to know the truth and live the lie,
Caught in the maelstrom of the multitude,
And, in the common cloth of fools endued,
To think like God and like an insect die.
To give up what I have not were not vain.
Call you this Life I drag from day to day?
My dreams have wings of fire, but crawl in
clay.

I see the heights, yet cannot leave the
plain. . . .

O, He is cruel who makes known the way
And gives not strength the summit to attain!

PREDESTINATION

THERE is no peace for the blowing leaf,
The end of his journey he never knows:
He lifts from the ground with an upward heave
Or settles, as lulls the wind or blows.

And he ever pretends to his traveling friends
Mottled with crimson, dappled with fire,
That he knows the country to which he wends,
That he shapes his ways to his own desire.

SIGHT BEYOND SIGHT

IF the good Lord had but restored
My sight, that were unkind
To wend abroad and stare and nod
And yet within be blind!

But with that hand and that command
That filled the eye with light
He gave to me the gift to see
Beyond the reach of sight.

I DEEMED I DWELT ALONE

I DEEMED I dwelt alone.

I felt my life beat single in my breast.
And then I looked about:
The myriad lives that murmur in the grass,
The million dwellers 'neath
Each moss-enchased and lichen-spotted stone
Called, "Friend, take thought of us—
We too aspire and dream our insect dreams!"

THE THRESHING MACHINE

THE green, fresh jackets of earèd corn
 looked cool amid the vibrant heat
As we trod the stacks, and flung, day-long, the
 yellow bundles of corded wheat
Into the maw of the threshing machine, while
 the curved knives glinted in the sun

As they swept with a periodic whirr and clove
 the bundles, one by one.
The ever-recurring coil of the belt in a black
 ellipse sped round and round,
And the chuff and snort of the engine's breath
 the lowing of pastured cattle drowned. . . .

Stack after stack our sturdy arms fed into the
 jaws of the toothed machine
While the blowing-funnel heaped behind the
 threshed straw separate and clean,
And the farmers backed their wagons up and
 held brown bags to a magic spout

From which, in intermittent streams, the yellow
grain came rushing out.

When amber twilight softly laid its shadows
on the rustling corn,

We stacked our forks, untrussed the belts, and
gladly answered the supper-horn—

And, said the foreman, as we sat at board,
with hunger whetted keen,

“Let poets sing of flails and such—But *I* thank
God for the threshing machine!”

THE CABLES AND THE WIRELESS

THE cable-operators swore because they
 had lost a word,
And the wireless-workers wondered why a
 break in the code occurred. . . .

The plaint of the Deep-sea Cables as they lie
 in their sunless bed
While liners flit like wind-blown clouds through
 the watery vast o'erhead;
Couched soft in ever-dripping ooze, and covered
 with living shells
Alive with innumerable things and inquisitive
 tentacles,
O'er ridges of tide-washed mountains, thro'
 fish-haunted valleys they go;
Above them the ponderous waters swing and
 the crashing tempests blow,
And many a night the Milky Way bends its
 magnificent bow
Along the vault of the star-vast sky, its glory
 reflected below;

Its smoke's blue hint on the heaven's edge the
lone tramp steamer trails,
And day by day great ships sweep by with flash
and glimmer of sails,
While deep in watery empires dim where
silence brims to the shores
The lightning-footed messages leap along the
ocean-floors . . .
The plaint of the Deep-sea Cables beholding
their empire done,
Of every office stripped to clothe the Newly-
Anointed One:
"For many a year, alone, obscure, we've toiled
unceasing for Man
And added as suburbs to London the cities of
teeming Japan;
We've dragged our lengths laboriously from
Deep to profounder Deep,
And harnessed our souls to the will of Him—
and, lo, the reward we reap!
For He has discovered a feminine thing that
runs with the great winds free
Over the leagues of the steadfast land and the
shifting acres of sea;
She steals the warm live words from our
mouths, and now they will let us lie

Abandoned amid the ooze and shells, to drop
to pieces and die,
Here with the rotten hulks of ships and the
bones of mariners,
No more to throb with the rapid tide of human
passions and fears."

Now the sensitive heart of the Wireless by the
grief of her forbears was stirred,
And, bending above them, she sent them the
balm of a soothing word:
"Be silent, ye Deep-sea Cables! Your echoing
voices arouse
The sleep and the sloth of the ocean and the
things which inhabit his house;
Chide not, for I too am the vassal, like you,
of the effort of Man
To push further back the horizon toward the
verge of the Infinite Plan.
And perhaps in the widening ages and the mani-
fold days which ensue
I too must step down from my conquest, and
render my wand to a new
And swifter-footed Invention, which, leaping
the chasm to Mars,
Will link all the planets together in a common
code of the stars,

And a large and unthought-of communion will
tie on its sandals and run
Its errands from planet to planet—from the
flaming hills of the sun
To the swing of the outermost orbit 'twill flash
on its messages, free,
As I thro' the wide air-ocean, as you thro' the
deeps of the sea."

Then the Wireless resumed her travail, and
peace reigned again as of yore,
And the Cables gave over their clamor and
bickered and fretted no more. . . .

But the Cable Operators swore because they
had lost a word,
And the Wireless-Workers wondered why a
break in the code occurred.

THE CRY OF YOUTH

I HEARD Youth crying in the night:
"Gone is my former world-delight;
For there is naught my feet may stay;
The morn suffuses into day,
It dare not stand a moment still
But must the world with light fulfil.
More evanescent than the rose,
My sudden rainbow comes and goes
Plunging bright ends across the sky—
Yea, I am Youth because I die!"



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